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Testimony in Support of SB 226
Transportation Committee
Senator Kevin Kelly
February 4, 2013

Good Morning Chairmen Maynard and Guerrero, Ranking Members Boucher and Scribner. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify in support of *Senate Bill 226, An Act Concerning a Study to Increase Mass Transit Usage in Fairfield County*.

The intention of this proposal is to make public transportation a more attractive option, both for Metro North commuters and for current drivers who endure the congestion on I-95, the Merritt Parkway, and Route 8.

Senate Bill 226 would require the Department of Transportation to explore methods of increasing and promoting mass transit. Any commuter will tell you the current public transportation system contains both strengths and weaknesses. Identifying those weaknesses and finding ways to alleviate them is critical to promoting increased use of public transit. Some examples of ways to accomplish this include the use of double-decker rail cars, employer incentives to increase employee use and improved shuttle service from rail and bus stations to employer locations.

Increasing usage of mass transportation in Connecticut is dependent upon our ability to offer a convenient alternative to driving. Metro North train usage is extremely high for Connecticut residents traveling to and from New York City for two reasons. First, it is more convenient than driving because you can get anywhere from Grand Central Station by taxi, subway, or bus. Second, it is less expensive than driving and parking. However, the same conveniences are not available to in-state commuters. Once they get to their destination stations there is no convenient way for them to get to their office unless their business provides a shuttle.

I have read the Department's testimony and I acknowledge that they have made efforts to reduce congestion based on previously conducted studies. However, the fact remains that congestion on I-95 is chronic. While DOT takes steps to implement the recommendations from those prior studies, the resolution to solving the chronic congestion problem is not static and we should continue to evaluate, and implement strategies until the problem is solved.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you this morning. I believe that this small step will lead to significant improvements in our public transportation system, and I urge the committee's favorable consideration.